Abstract

World Future Society, Annual conference, July 31, 2007, Minneapolis, MN

Futurists often encounter religionists who embrace views that undercut future-oriented behavior, including determinism, fatalism or millennial beliefs. But as a Palestinian Jew, what was Jesus’ real view of the future? And how does that view compare with futurists, who focus on ‘this world,’ rather than the next? Drawing on historical Jesus research this session identifies three driving forces of the first-century, and argues that Jesus rejected the conventional and counter futures of his time to envision a creative future for his generation. This first-century foresight will then be compared and contrasted with 21st-century global scenario frameworks to consider how visionary leadership might shift the inner place from which society responds to impending conflicts and catastrophes.

Panelists

Dr. Corné Bekker  
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innerresourcesforleaders

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Director, Center for Strategic Futurist Thinking  
Author, Optimistic Jew

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A History of the Future?

Should the historical Jesus be included in the pre-history of future studies? As a Palestinian Jew, what was Jesus’ real view of the future? Could the future as Jesus saw it be a resource to contemporary foresight practitioners?
Carl Sagan

Sagan laments that scientists have to carry out their mission in a demon-haunted world, filled with superstitious claims of alien abductions, crop circles, and fairy sightings. Likewise, futurists today must work in a “Jesus-haunted” culture.

Doomsday!

“Futurism is incompatible with religious worldviews, shaped by determinism, fatalism, apocalyptic or afterlife beliefs” – Bruce Tonn, PhD

What can a Galilean Jew teach us about creating our future?
It's Your Turn!

1. Name 2 approaches that we might take to talk about "The Future According to Jesus."
   * 
   * 

2. Rank yourself confidence (1-high; 4-low) in your ability to:
   - Explain to others the history of futures thinking.
   - Share how Jesus approached the future of his society.
   - Relate Jesus’ 1st century leadership to 21st century challenges.
   - Compare and contrast eschatology with futurology.

Modern Time

Past | Present | Future
--- | --- | ---
History | Perception | Hopes
Identity | Achievements | Fears
Achievements | | Intentions
Hopes | Fears | Plans

Past, present, future

Mediterranean Time

Past, present, future

Jesus: 3 Futures

1. Conventional
2. Counter
3. Creative
1. Conventional

- Business as usual
- Official future
- The Main story
- Top-Down

2. Counter

3. Creative

What Future? Palestine

Urbanization

Jerusalem: Temple & State

Romanization

Caesarea & Empire

- emperor worship
- military occupation

Herod’s World

Class Port

Man-Made Harbor

Commercialization

Sephphoris

Roman Cardo, 20 A.D.
So when Jesus comes proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is near,” Crossan claims his audience would have understood his proclamation as relief against the intensive Romanization, urbanization and commercialization that first entered the Jewish homeland through Caesarea.

Jesus’ Foresight

He forecast the “official future” and its Jewish Temple state would collapse, with “not one stone being left upon another.”

Jesus: 3 Futures

1. Conventional
2. Counter
3. Creative

Ante-Bellum

Bellum
1. Conventional
2. Counter
3. Creative

Counter Future
- Rocky road ahead
- Facing a crisis
- We must intervene
- Bottom up

Resistance took two forms, either:
- Flight or Fight

Jesus: 3 Futures

Pharisees

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1. Conventional

2. Counter

3. Creative

Creative Future

- There is a better way
- Beyond fight or flight, Jesus offered a third way: faith

Jesus’ New Way

- Unlike the Zealots, faith for Jesus did not mean a repeat of history, i.e. the “Maccabean Miracle” of 167 B.C.
- The “official future” and its Jewish Temple state would collapse, with “not one stone being left upon another.”

3. Creative

Upon himself

He would take upon himself Israel’s rage, and defeat it, saving her from the judgment to come.

Jesus’ New Way

Those who followed in his way would be spared from the carnage of the impending Great War.

Jesus: 3 Futures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Counter</th>
<th>Creative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Probable</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Preferable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>Ideal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>Side stream</td>
<td>Upstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>Bottom-Up</td>
<td>Inside Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The Galilean has been too great for our small hearts.” - H.G. Wells

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Futures Framework

- Increasing Quality of Life
- Voluntary Transformation
- Present Change
- Business as Usual
- Crisis
- Collapse
- 3. Preferable
- Post-Crisis

The Road Ahead

Adapted: Hardin Tibbs, Yes mag, 1998

1. Probable
2. Possible
3. Preferable

How did this model help you understand Jesus' world?

How could futurists apply this framework to their work today?

The Future According to Jesus

- Transformational change
- World futures
- Global Leadership

Dr. Corné Bekker

- Associate Professor
- MBA, entrepreneurial
- M.A. in Strategic Foresight
- Doctor of Strategic Leadership
- PhD in Org. Leadership

The Horizon of the Kingdom?

1. Imminent? (Schweitzer, 1901)
2. Existential? (Bultmann, 1957)
3. Inaugurated? (Cullman, 1950)
4. Contextual? (Wright, 1992)
Ask Ourselves?

How might contextual approaches today to a “third-exodus,” whether Moses-like or Jesus-like, critique extreme ideologies, that couch themselves in fundamentalism, nationalism or colonialism, and lead the 21st-century world-system to a post-growth, post-crisis economy?

This session helped me appreciate …